Solid Waste

Solid waste includes garbage, recyclable materials, organic materials, yard waste, appliances, bulk waste and other solid waste from residences or commercial properties. Disposal of this enormous amount of waste has the potential to negatively impact the environment and public health. Waste reduction, reuse and recycling practices hold the greatest potential to reduce the amount of waste being disposed. St. Louis Park is committed to helping its residents reduce waste and increase recycling.

Management of solid waste involves the collection, transport, recycling or disposal of waste materials in an effort to reduce their effect on public health and protect public safety and the environment. The Minnesota State Legislature has set an aggressive recycling goal of reaching 75% recycling by 2030. The city has placed growing emphasis on reducing the amount of solid waste generated by the city by implementing programs and activities that support reuse, recycling and organics and yard waste composting.

Where We Have Been

History of Solid Waste Program

- 1940s- City began contracting for garbage collection service for single family homes.
- 1982 – Curbside recycling pilot began with 2,200 participating households.
- 1984- Citywide recycling program implemented for single family homes.
- 1997 – City began the organized collection process for solid waste collection services.
- 2008- City expanded the curbside program to allow smaller businesses and multifamily residential buildings to participate in the program if their waste could be handled with garbage carts and recycling bins.
- 2013- City rolled out a residential curbside organics program for the collection of food scraps and other compostable material, and also switched to a single-stream recycling program, which allows cans, bottles and paper to be comingled in a single cart.

Leader and Innovator in Solid Waste

St. Louis Park has continued to expand efforts to promote waste reduction and reuse and increase the materials collected for recycling, including:

- Being an early adopter of organics collection when it added residential curbside service in 2013 and organics drop-sites for multifamily residents in 2017.
- Adopting a Zero Waste Packaging ordinance to reduce waste generated by food and beverage containers sold in restaurants and other food establishments.
- Adding events to promote the reuse of clothing, gardening supplies and building materials.
- Expanding the types of materials collected for recycling at annual cleanup events.
- Contracting for residential curbside collection of textiles and small household goods.
- Being the first city in the state to set a minimum capacity requirement for recycling in multifamily buildings

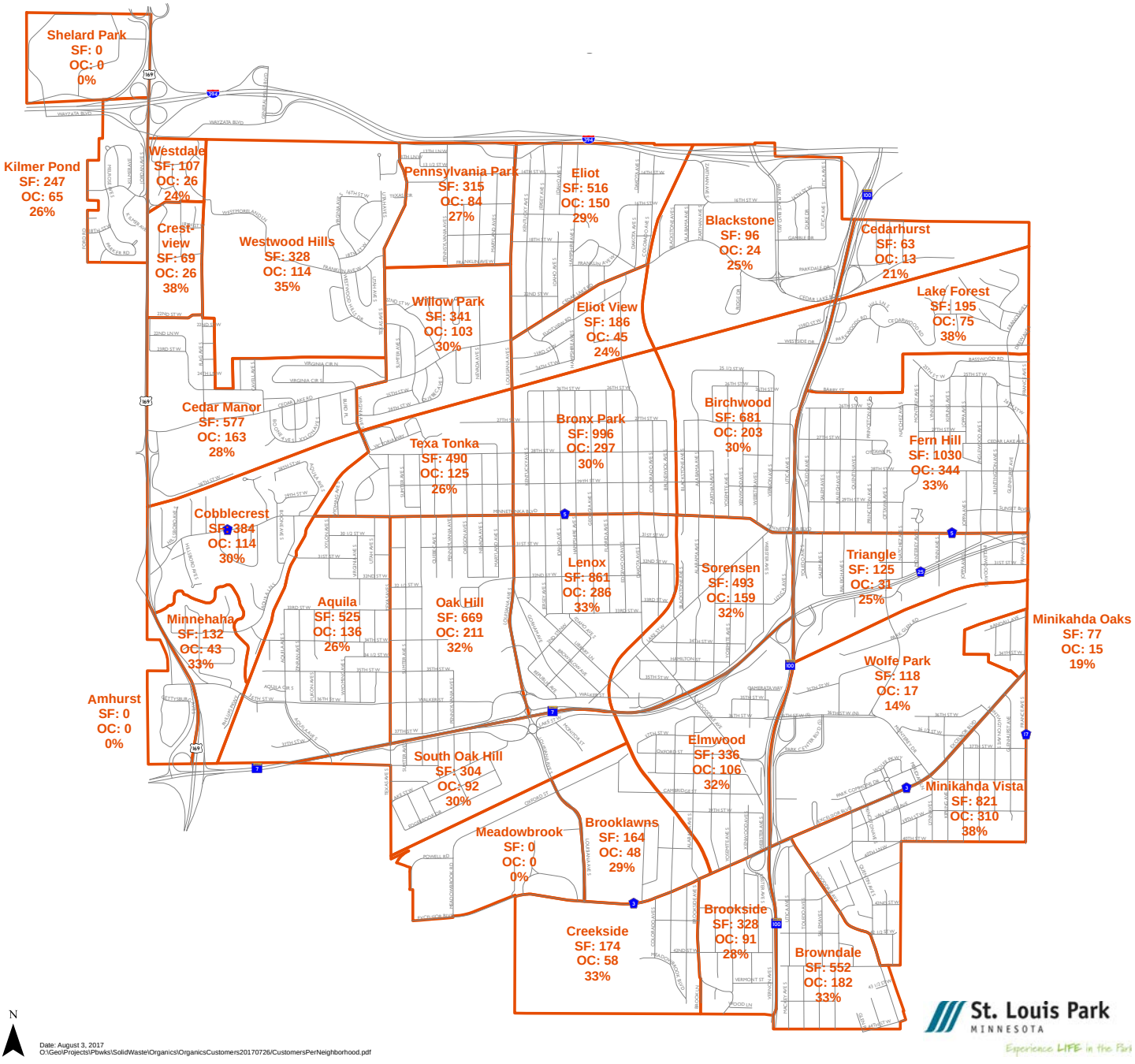
Single-stream Recycling

In 2013 the city's residential recycling program made the switch to single-stream recycling. This program allows residents to commingle their recyclable paper, bottles and cans in a wheeled cart. Previously the city used dual-stream recycling, where cans and bottles were collected separately from papers in plastic totes. This change to single-stream recycling followed an industry trend to switch because of improved technology at the material recovery facilities (MRF) that accept, sort and market recyclable material. The change brought about several benefits, including allowing the city to switch to every-other-week recycling collection, reducing collection truck traffic, idling and wear and tear on city streets. Placing recyclables in lidded carts also greatly reduced litter.

Organics

The city implemented a curbside residential organics program at the end of 2013 for the collection of food scraps, papers such as tissues and paper towels, and certified-compostable food and beverage containers. Initially there was an additional fee to participate. However in 2017 it was included in the solid waste rates and participation doubled from 15% in December 2016 to 30% in November 2017. Figure 4-20 shows organics participation by neighborhood.

Figure 4-20. Organics Participation by Neighborhood (Jan 2018)



SF: Single-family homes with city solid waste services
OC: Homes with organics service.
%: Percent of households participating

Guidance and Goals from Hennepin County

St. Louis Park works with Hennepin County to reach recycling goals set by the Minnesota State Legislature. The city works regularly with the county to standardize educational messages and provide feedback to the County on its Solid Waste Management Master Plan.

Program Funding

The Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) was established by Governor Perpich to provide a funding source for solid waste programs throughout Minnesota. SCORE funds are derived from a state tax on residential and commercial garbage collection and disposal fees, set at 9.75% and 17% respectively. These funds are distributed to counties for solid waste programs, particularly recycling collection. Since 1988 the city has received annual grants from Hennepin County as an aid in supporting the residential curbside recycling program that serves all single family through four-unit residential structures. The County's share of SCORE funds is divided between cities on a proportional basis by the number of households.

The current 2017-2020 SCORE funding policy will continue to fund city recycling programs, but will gradually shift to support organics. The collection of food scraps and other organic material for composting has been identified as the greatest opportunity to reduce trash coming from households in the city. In 2017, 20 percent of funding was allocated to organics programs. By 2020, half of the funding will be dedicated to supporting organics.

Where We Are Today

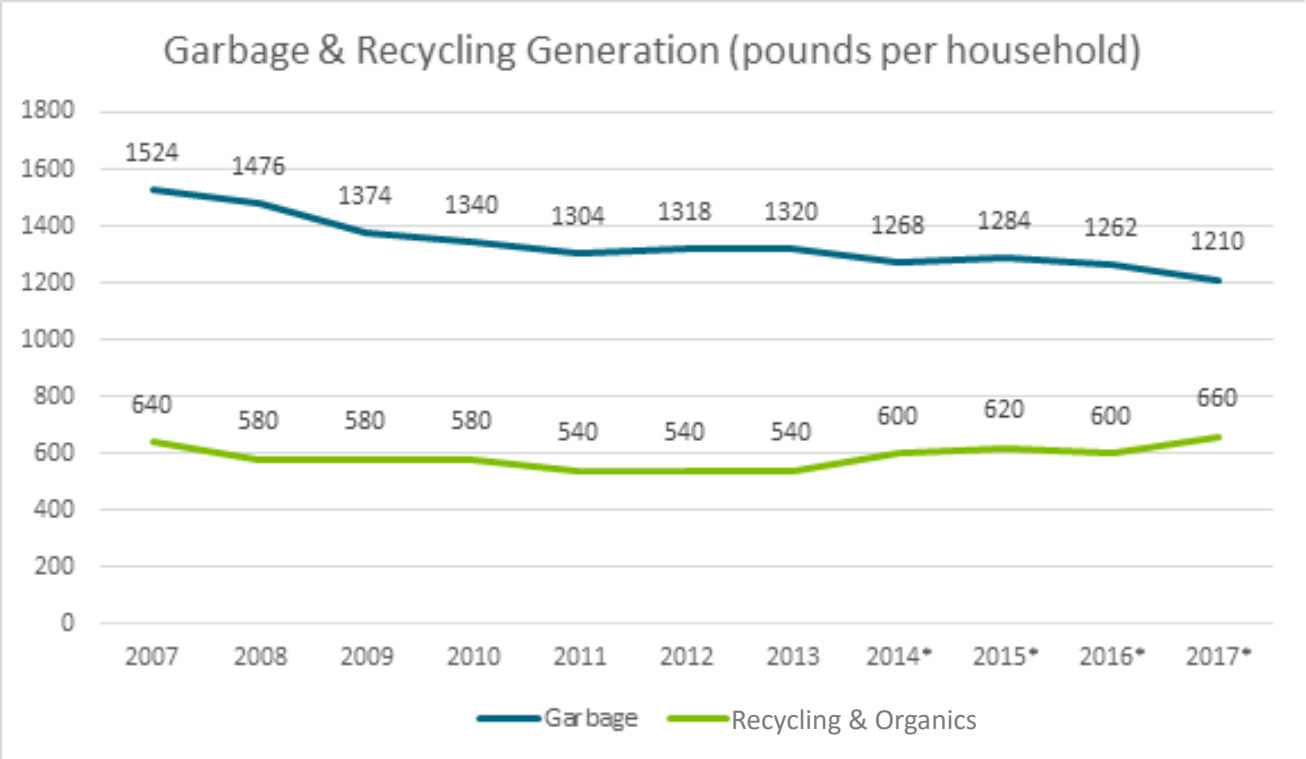
Collection System

Residential Solid Waste History

The city has organized collection through contracts with private haulers for residential collection of garbage, recycling, organics and yard waste for single family homes through four-unit residences.

Figure 4-21 shows that the amount of garbage collected through the city's residential solid waste program over the past ten years has decreased by 2%. During that same time frame the residential recycling rate has grown by one-third of one percent as a result of adding the organics program in 2013, which provides for the collection of food scraps for composting.

Figure 4-21. Comparison between Garbage & Recycling Generation (pounds per household per year)



The reduction in traditional recycling of cans, bottles, paper, and boxes is due to the fact that solid waste is tracked by weight. Recyclables in general are now manufactured with fewer and lighter materials. For example, products that were once packaged in heavier glass bottles and jars have switched to lightweight pouches or cartons. Also, changes in consumer behavior, such as the switch from newspapers to online news have affected recycling rates.

The organics and expanded recycling programs have helped to reduce the total amount of garbage from 10,000 tons in 2000 to 7,425 tons in 2017 (Table 4-29).

Table 4-29. Annual generation by ton for material collected through the city's Residential Solid Waste Program

YEAR	GARBAGE (TONS)	RECYCLING (TONS)	ORGANICS (TONS)
2000	10,004	4,033	0
2007	9,300	3,861	0
2017	7,425	3,510	476

In addition, recycling, organics and yard waste now account for approximately 51% of the total waste generated, which represents an improvement over the figure of 43% from ten years earlier.

Textile Recycling

A surprising amount of textiles are thrown in the trash each year. In addition to encouraging donations to the local charities and holding clothing swaps, the city provides curbside collection of textiles and small home goods for reuse and recycling. The current program began in 2017 when the city entered into a contract with Simple Recycling.

Yard waste collection and brush site

Yard waste, such as leaves, grass clippings, branches, brush, and garden waste, are collected separately from garbage through the residential solid waste program (it has been illegal to put yard waste in the trash since 1992). Yard waste collected in bags must be placed in either paper or certified compostable plastic bags. The city's brush site became available to residents in 2013 for discarding branches, brush or logs that were too big for pickup through the residential collection program. The city also provides free compost, mulch and screened black dirt to residents at the site.

Organics drop-sites for residents of multifamily buildings

In July 2017, the city piloted an organics drop-site program for residents living in multifamily buildings. The program was successful and became permanent in October 2017. Residents of apartments, condominiums and townhomes without city collection service can drop off organics at one of the collection sites around the city.

Disposal

Where does the garbage go?

Approximately one-half of all residential solid waste generated in St. Louis Park is recycled or composted. The remaining garbage is either incinerated or put in landfills. There are no active landfills in St. Louis Park, but several old landfill sites are within its boundaries.

St. Louis Park's residential garbage goes to the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC), a waste-to-energy facility. The HERC burns garbage and uses the heat to produce steam. The steam is used to generate electricity, which is sold to Xcel Energy, and powers 25,000 homes each year. In addition, HERC provides steam for heating and cooling to the downtown Minneapolis district energy system and Target Field. HERC also reclaims 11,000 tons of ferrous metal from garbage each year. Bulk items that cannot be recycled or burned are put in landfills.

Where do the recyclables go?

Recyclables collected through the city's program are delivered to Waste Management's Recycle America material recovery facility (MRF) where they are sorted, baled and marketed for recycling in Minnesota, the United States and internationally. Textiles and small home goods collected through the textile recycling program are delivered to a consolidation facility in Michigan where the material is sold, with approximately 20% going to thrift organizations, 50% going to be recycled as rag, absorbents, and insulation, 25% is exported as secondhand clothing and about 5% is identified as unusable and unrecyclable.

Where do the organics and yard waste go?

Organics and yard waste collected through the city's program are delivered to Specialized Environmental Technologies' (SET) facilities in the Twin Cities metro for composting. Organics are composted at SET's commercial composting facility in Dakota County. Yard waste is composted at SET's commercial composting facility with organics or at its yard waste facilities in Burnsville or Shakopee. The city receives some of the finished compost, which is free to residents and community gardens.

City Policy and Initiatives

Solid Waste Ordinance (Chapter 22)

The city's solid waste ordinance was revised in 2017. The revised ordinance modernizes definitions, brings the city curbside program requirements in line with current practices, clarifies and improves recycling requirements for multifamily buildings, adds recycling requirements for commercial buildings, revises standards for backyard compost bins and updates bulk material container (dumpster) requirements.

Multifamily Recycling

For some time the city has required multifamily building owners to provide their residents with the opportunity to recycle. In 2017, changes were made to the specific requirements for these programs. Most significantly, a minimum recycling capacity requirement was set to help ensure that sufficient recycling capacity is available in buildings. In addition, an educational requirement was created to address issues of contamination and confusion for multifamily residents. Going forward, property managers will need to provide recycling information to all residents on an annual basis.

In 2017-2018, the city was selected to host a Minnesota GreenCorps member through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. This allowed the city to do extensive outreach to multifamily properties, gather data on existing recycling services and provide educational materials to property managers.

Commercial Recycling

In 2018, the city adopted the state law into city code for recycling at existing commercial buildings. More specific requirements were also set for new construction, including the requirement that any building with a licensed food establishment will be required to provide organics recycling.

Zero Waste Packaging Ordinance

St. Louis Park's Zero Waste Packaging Ordinance took effect January 1, 2017, and requires that licensed food establishments use packaging that is reusable, recyclable or compostable when serving food and beverages that are intended for immediate consumption, regardless of where the item is consumed (on site or taken to-go). If the packaging is used to serve food on-site, appropriate recycling and/or organics recycling receptacles and hauling service must be in place.

Parks Recycling

The city received a Hennepin County Public Space Recycling Grant in 2016 to improve recycling in city parks. Recycling carts were added to 41 parks, and recycling collected increased by 204% during the first year. Standard signage was also added, which included images of recyclable materials that can be placed in the cart. In 2018 the city will be expanding recycling education for park users that rent spaces for special events to increase recycling and decrease contamination in recycling carts.

Event Recycling

Staff supports event recycling whenever possible. Events can include large celebrations such as Parktacular and small gatherings such as neighborhood block parties. Resident volunteers trained through the Recycling Champions program have been mobilized to assist event attendees with sorting recyclables and compostables from the trash. In 2018 the city was awarded a Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association Award of Excellence for this volunteer mobilization effort.

City Programs

In addition to curbside collection programs, the city is directly involved in events and educational activities to promote waste reduction and recycling as well as special collection events for problem materials.

Reuse Events

In 2017 the city began hosting clothing and gardeners' swap events as a way to promote reuse. Anyone was welcome to participate, free of charge. The city plans to host more reuse events in the coming years.

CLOTHING SWAPS

In the two clothing swap events:

- 210 people participated
- 2,700 pounds of clothing and accessories were brought
  - 1,555 swapped
  - 965 pounds donated to charities

Spring and Fall Cleanup Days

Twice a year, the city provides a cleanup day event for residents. At these events the city charges a fee to accept material for disposal, recycling or reuse. Such events highlight the city's commitment to the environment by providing convenient disposal options to discourage illegal dumping and collecting items that have limited recycling options.

Winter Mini-Cleanup

The city held its first winter cleanup event in 2018. This was a mini version of the regular cleanups both in time and scope. Residents were able to drop off confidential papers for shredding, batteries and holiday lights and electrical cords. These items are all problem materials in the curbside recycling program. Providing convenient opportunities for residents to properly discard these items helps reduce contamination in recycling.

Education and Outreach

Public works staff provides information and education through various media to encourage waste reduction and recycling. Educational efforts focus on reducing waste, increasing recycling and organics, properly disposing of problem materials and encouraging backyard composting. Education is provided through the city's website, social media, Park Perspective newsletters, the Sun Sailor newspaper, ads in the City-School calendar and individual mailings. Staff members also host workshops and open houses, visit with residents, attend public events, and meet with school children to teach them about garbage and recycling. Most recently, staff leveraged social media using Facebook and Instagram accounts to share images of common and not-so-common items and how to recycle or dispose of them. The photos are accessible through the city's Facebook page photo album called the "Know Before You Throw Guide."

Recycling Champions

The Recycling Champions program was launched in 2017 to engage residents who are interested in learning more about recycling. Residents serve as ambassadors in the community and share what they learn with family, friends and neighbors.

In the first year of the program, 70 residents signed up and 50 attended training to serve as Recycling Champions in the community. Several volunteered at events, shared resources at neighborhood parties and educated fellow residents on topics related to recycling. City staff continues to work with these enthusiastic volunteers to promote quality recycling and waste prevention in the city.

Community Partnerships

In 2018, the city partnered with the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) to increase awareness and participation in the city's organics program. RAM worked in the city to educate residents through presentations at neighborhood meetings and educational workshops for new and existing organics participants. RAM's work was funded through a Hennepin County Green Partners Grow Grant. City staff continues to work to identify community partners as well as other innovative ways to reach residents with information on waste reduction, reuse and recycling opportunities.

Where We Are Headed

Future Initiatives

Optional Every-Other-Week Garbage Collection

The city conducted an every-other-week garbage pilot from September 2017 – March 2018 to test the use of an every other week garbage collection frequency for residents that produce small amounts of trash. The city added this service option for garbage collection beginning January 2019.

Compost Use

The city promotes the use of compost to residents because it builds healthy soils through increasing water and nutrient holding capacity and reducing erosion, among other benefits. Beginning in 2018, the city's contract for composting organics and yard waste includes a requirement for finished compost to be made available to residents, community gardens and special events each year. The city's climate action plan includes using compost as a soil amendment for public and private construction projects as one of many actions to support the plan. The city will also consider adding compost use to the Environmental Purchasing Policy and will explore further use of compost in construction projects through the city's Storm Water Management Plan.

Source Separated Organics

In 2019 the city began collecting organics and yard waste separately. This new collection method allows organics to be processed more efficiently and reduces the space that the city's material takes up in the processing area at the commercial composting facility. This collection method also allows the city to more accurately track the amount of food scraps and other organics that are collected through the program and better address contamination issues. The organics program has had a very low contamination rate since the program began in 2013, and has maintained a 1.5% contamination rate for the past two years.

Support Deconstruction

Construction and demolition are sources of large volumes of waste, however it is not often included in discussions of recycling and reuse. Most often when a building is taken down, it is bulldozed and much of the material is landfilled, though metal and concrete are often recycled. Deconstruction of homes and businesses can preserve the value of materials for future use. Windows, doors, fixtures and even lumber can be carefully removed such that they can be repurposed by others. The city has begun partnering with Hennepin County and others to support deconstruction in St. Louis Park. The city will work to lead by example by considering and opting for deconstruction when possible on publicly owned structures. In addition, staff will educate residents and the private sector on deconstruction options. In partnership with local non-profits, the city will host a new event to collect usable building materials in fall 2019.

Solid Waste Goals and Strategies

1. Continue to Provide Education and Outreach to Community

Strategies

A. Incorporate innovative or non-traditional outreach methods to educate community members on recycling and waste reduction.

B. Create and provide multi-lingual education.

C. Focus education on event recycling for users of city-owned properties.

D. Identify opportunities for internal education.

2. Support and Increase Waste Reduction

Strategies

A. Continue to improve and enforce the city's zero waste packaging ordinance.

B. Adopt a waste reduction plan to achieve a 50% reduction in garbage, citywide, by 2050.

C. Continue to adjust city solid waste rates to support pay-as-you-throw rate model.

D. Continue to explore deconstruction opportunities in residential and commercial demolition projects.

3. Support Repair/Reuse/Recycling/ Composting Markets

Strategies

A. Ensure that city purchases include recycled content.

B. Work toward a requirement that approved compost is used for city parks, roads, private development and construction projects.

C. Develop and implement a soil management policy for any construction projects (public/private) to improve organic content of soil through the use of compost.

4. Increase Recycling & Organics Recycling

Strategies

A. Increase residential organics recycling participation to 50% by 2030 and 80% by 2040.

B. Continue to support multifamily recycling by identifying properties to include in residential collection program and research the feasibility of incorporating small dumpster service in future city contracts for small to mid-sized multifamily buildings.

C. Educate and enforce the commercial and multifamily recycling requirements of the Solid Waste Ordinance.

D. Improve public space event recycling through increasing availability of recycling containers, improving signage, mobilizing volunteers and other best management practices.